

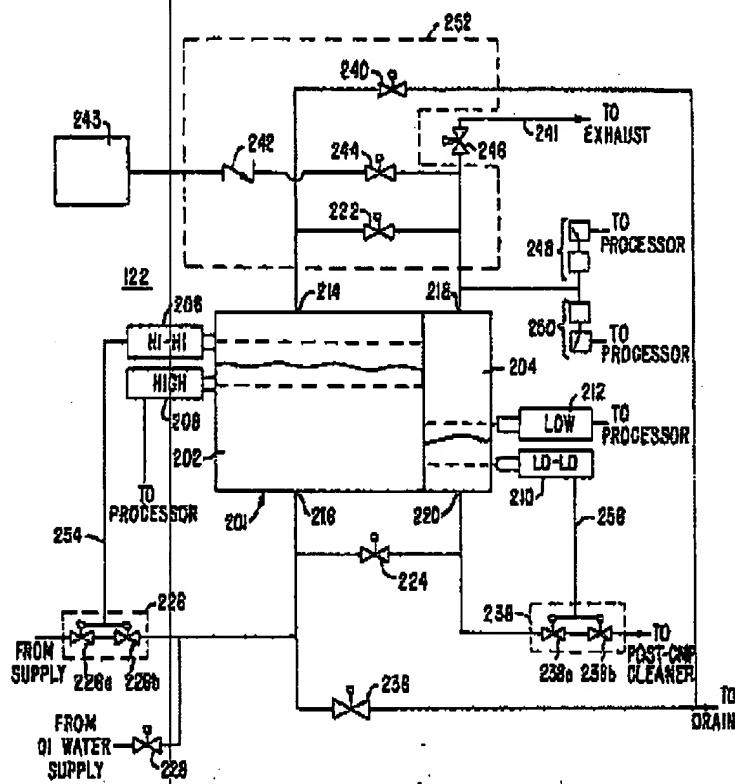
Appl. No. 09/729,128
Reply to Office Action of April 11, 2003

PATENT

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-14 and 20 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1 and 20 have been amended.

The present invention relates to systems and methods for dispensing material to a semiconductor processing tool. As illustrated in Figure 2, one embodiment of a module in accordance with the present invention comprises a vessel defining adjacent integral chambers separated by a common wall.

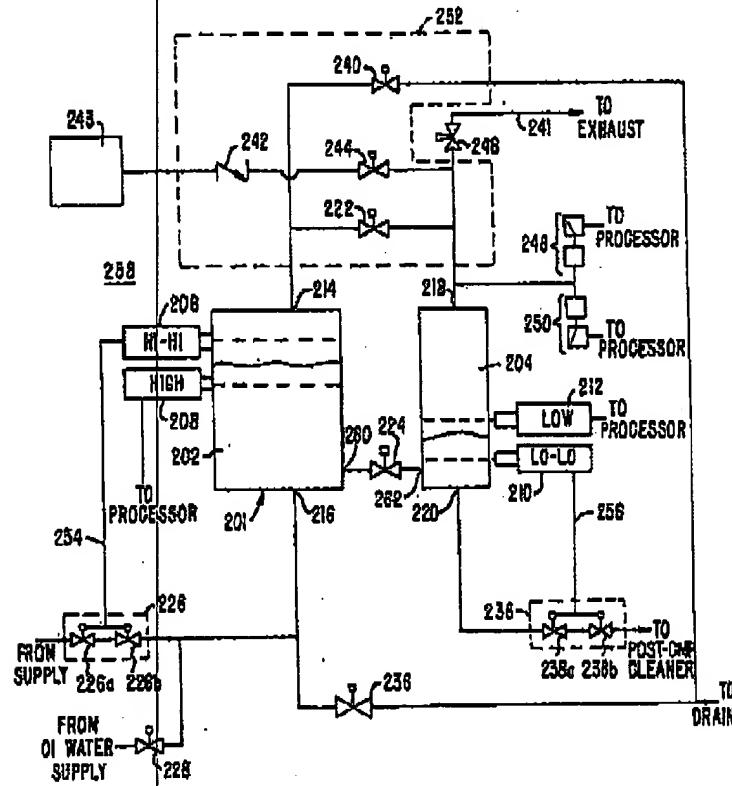


Each chamber includes inlet and outlet ports configured to be in selective fluid communication with material sources, with the processing tool, or with each other, through a valve assembly. To promote simplicity in fabrication and operation of the device, in certain embodiments this valve assembly is external to the vessel defining the integral chambers. (See page 8, lines 6-15).

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The embodiment shown in Figure 2 of the application may be contrasted with Figure 3, which depicts an alternative embodiment comprising separate, nonintegral chambers which do not share a common wall and which are in selective fluid communication with each other through a valve system that is internal to the vessel.



Independent claims 1 and 20 have now been amended to emphasize the aspect illustrated in Figure 2 of the present invention, wherein integral chambers defined by a vessel and separated by a common wall are in fluid communication with an external valve assembly.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-4 as anticipated under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) by U.S. Patent No. 6,199,599 to Gregg et al. ("the Gregg patent"). The Examiner has also rejected claims 1-14 and 20 as anticipated under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) by U.S. Patent No. 5,417,346 to Ferri, Jr. et al. ("the Ferri patent"). These claim rejections are traversed as follows.

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The Gregg and Ferri patents do describe apparatuses for delivering liquid materials. Unlike the present invention however, neither the Ferri nor the Gregg patent teach a system comprising multiple chambers integral within a single vessel. Instead, the Gregg patent indicates the physical distinctness of the canisters supplying the liquid material, indicating that removal/replacement of the canisters may require specific actions to purge the delivery lines to prevent clogging or obstruction during the process. (Col. 2, lines 31-46). Figures 1A-B of the Ferri patent similarly illustrate multiple distinct containers housed within a common shell. Neither the Gregg patent nor the Ferri patent teach or suggest dispensing materials from integral chambers sharing a common wall. Because the claims have now been amended to require the presence of a vessel defining integral chambers separated by a common wall, it is respectfully asserted the pending claims are not anticipated or obvious in light of these references.

Based at least upon the above distinctions between the pending claims and the art relied upon by the Examiner, it is respectfully asserted that the prior rejection of the claims as anticipated or obvious have been successfully overcome. If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 650-326-2400.

Respectfully submitted,


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